

Warden's memo puts him on leave

By CARLA CROWDER

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Days before being placed on mandatory leave, Donaldson Correctional Facility Warden Stephen Bullard sent out a memo warning of "catastrophic circumstances" at the prison.

"I am concerned that it is going to take a lawsuit, not death or serious injury, for anyone to take this crisis seriously," Bullard wrote in the March 1 memo to Alabama Department of Corrections Commissioner Donal Campbell.

The warden's concerns focused on correctional officers who have been forced to work overtime, sometimes 32 hours per week. The staff shortage took a toll on him, as well, affecting his health, patience and tolerance, he wrote.

On March 4, Bullard was informed that Campbell had placed him on a mandatory 10-business-day leave, which could be extended.

Department of Corrections spokesman Brian Corbett said that, because the leave is an administrative matter, he could not comment on the reasons for it.

Campbell has acknowledged the staffing shortages and crowding at Donaldson. He approved a 5 percent pay differential for Donaldson officers in an attempt to recruit more to the ranks.

Bullard used stronger language, however, and said the state was taking advantage of employees.

"It is also my opinion that should an employee be injured or even sue for harassment on unfair ... employment practices the department would have no legal standing to defend these charges," he wrote.

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With space for about 1,000 prisoners, Donaldson houses 1,625, crowding that has overloaded the prison's sewage system. It houses many mentally ill inmates and some of the people on Death Row.

Bullard said in an interview that he has asked many times to be transferred to another prison but was turned down.

Donaldson is considered by most in the department to be the most stressful institution in

the state," he said. "I've paid my dues. I've been there for five years, and it's somebody else's turn."

Most recently, officers are refusing to work mandatory overtime, calling in sick and requesting counseling and medication. It's become difficult for him to force overtime, he wrote in the memo.

Still, Bullard said that these are conditions he's spoken about in the past. And it's never resulted in forced leave, which he did not want to take.

"I'm very, very confused. I don't understand the tactic that is being used, and hopefully it will resolve itself," he said.

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